

AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS NATIONAL MUSEUM

50-state Women Honorees for January 2013

(Read About These Talented Women!)

www.americanwomenwritersnationalmuseum.org

(* Each month, AWWNM's 50-state Project features premier American women writers from four states)

WASHINGTON

Tess Gallagher (1943-), playwright and poet, was born in Port Angeles. Her first poetry collection, *Stepping Outside* (1974), was followed by 10 more poetry collections, a short story series and screenplays, including *The Night Belongs to the Police*. Gallagher's work attracted numerous awards and honors, including a Guggenheim Foundation fellowship and two National Endowment for the Arts Awards. A reviewer praised her poetry as reminders of "small moments of ordinary epiphany."

Richelle Mead (1976-) writes the popular Vampire Academy romantic fantasy series, including *Blood Promise* and *Shadow Kiss*. She left 8th grade teaching to launch a literary career. A 2011 *Seattle Times* article by Mary Ann Gwin lists other prominent women writers: **Debbie Macomber** (fiction), **Lisa Kleypas** (fiction), **Kristen Hannah** (fiction), **Julia Quinn** (historical romance), **Elizabeth George** and **Patricia Briggs**.



WEST VIRGINIA



The first American woman to win the Nobel Prize for literature (1938) *The Good Earth* is **Pearl S. Buck**, born in Hillsboro. Buck also won a Pulitzer Prize in 1932. Critics heralded her work as "biographical masterpieces" and "truly epic descriptions." Though she spent most of her career in China, Buck remained a prominent figure in America's literary world. Her novel *Good Earth* was the best-selling fiction book in the United States in 1931, 1932, and 2004. Her house, now the Pearl S. Buck Birthplace Museum, was for the young girl growing up abroad with missionary parents "a symbol of security and peace in a world where there was neither security nor peace." It figures prominently in early chapters of *The Exile*, Buck's biography of her mother.

Buck's ties with West Virginia remained strong even in the last decade of her life. In *My Mother's House*, Buck paid tribute to the house: "For me it was a living heart in the country I knew was my own but which was strange to me until I returned to the house where I was born. For me that house was a gateway to America."

West Virginia Poet Laureate **Irene McKinney** (1939-2012), born in Belington, published half-a-dozen poetry collections with titles such as: *The Girl with the Stone in Her Lap* (1976), *Vivid Companion* (2004), and *Unthinkable* (2009). McKinney, featured in the 2003 anthology *Listen Here: Women Writing Appalachia* said in the introduction, "I'm a hillbilly, a woman, and a poet. I understood early on that nobody was going to listen to anything I had to say anyway, so I might as well just say what I want to."

Musician-songwriter **Hazel Dickens** (1935-2011), born in Mercer County, was a pioneering old-time bluegrass musician, known for preserving traditional vocal styles of West Virginia. Dickens influenced a generation of female musicians and actively supported working people in West Virginia and throughout Appalachia. Songs such as "West Virginia, My Home" and "Mama's Hand" draw from Dickens's life in West Virginia. She was inducted into the West Virginia Music Hall of Fame in 2007.



Denise Giardina (1951-) born in Bluefield, whose most successful novels, *Storming Heaven* (1987) and *The Unquiet Earth* (1992), feature fictitious coal miners Rondal Lloyd and Dillon Freeman making their hard way in central Appalachia, circa 1890-1990. Giardina is interested in the complexities and ambiguities of the individual destined to answer the call of his or her particular moment. Giardina ran for governor of West Virginia on the Mountain Party ticket in 2000. She won the American Book Award for *The Unquiet Earth* in 1993.

WISCONSIN

Playwright **Zona Gale** (1874-1938), born in Portage. Her first novel, *Romance Island* (1906), would be the first installment to a very popular series. In 1921, she adapted her novel *Miss Lulu Bett* into a play for which she received the Pulitzer Prize in Drama, and was the first woman to win for that category.

Ellen Raskin (1928-1984), born in Milwaukee, wrote over a dozen books geared towards children and young adults. In 1974, she wrote *Figg and Phantoms*, for which she received the Newbery Honor. Raskin won a Newbery Medal for her 1978 book *The Westing Game*.



Native American **Denise Sweet** is an Anishinaabe poet and graphic artist. In 2004, she was appointed Poet Laureate of Wisconsin, serving until 2008. She has written several books and anthologies with titles such as *Women Brave in the Face of Danger*, and *Know By Heart*. Sweet has received the Diane Decorah Award, the Posner Award, and the Woman of the Year Award from the Wisconsin Women's Council.

WYOMING



Although **Lynne Cheney** is best known for her husband, Vice President Dick Cheney (2001-2009), she is talented in her own right. Born in Casper in 1941, the former 2nd Lady of the United States established herself as an accomplished author, penning over a dozen books. Some of her works include *Executive Privilege* (1979), and *Blue Skies, No Fences: A Memoir of Childhood and Family* (2007).

Journalist **Florebel Muir** (1889-1970) born in Rock Springs, was a reporter and newspaper columnist for *New York Daily News*, *New York Post*, and *Saturday Evening Post*. Her screenplay *Fighting Youth* was produced by Universal Studios in 1935.